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Oceans and the law of the sea

Letter dated 17 January 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the Convention for Cooperation in the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Marine Environment of the North-East Pacific, adopted together with its respective Action Plan in Antigua, Guatemala, on 18 February 2002 under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

As you know, the Convention represents an important addition to the efforts being made at the regional level to preserve the marine environment. (The Convention has been published in the *Law of the Sea Bulletin* (vol. 48, p. 46, of the English version) and on the Internet site www.unep.ch/seas/).

This Convention is the result of negotiations held in Panama and Nicaragua in 2000 and 2001 by high-level experts of the Governments concerned, with the support and advice of specialists from UNEP and the Central American Commission on Maritime Transport.

The Convention and its Action Plan constitute the tenth combined convention and action plan concluded within the framework of the UNEP regional seas programme.

The Convention defines the general obligations which the respective States must assume for the protection of the Pacific North-East; sets out measures to prevent, reduce, control and mitigate pollution and other forms of degradation of the marine environment and coastal areas; regulates the scope of cooperation in cases involving pollution and other forms of environmental degradation resulting from emergency situations; provides for the monitoring of pollution and other forms of environmental degradation and, in general, forms an integrated set of regulations to promote the sustainable development of the marine environment and coastal areas of the region concerned.

It should also be noted that this is the first convention adopted within the framework of the UNEP regional seas programme that constitutes implementation of

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the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities.

With the conclusion of this new treaty, the western coasts of the American continent are now largely covered by conventions adopted within the framework of the regional seas programme. Indeed, immediately to the south of the area covered by the Convention in question is the area encompassed by the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Area of the South-East Pacific, its five protocols and respective action plan. It is also worth mentioning that the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region fulfils similar functions on the other side of the Pacific. In this way, the coasts of the American continent are now largely encompassed by conventions concluded within the framework of the UNEP regional seas programme.

Given our interest in keeping all Member States informed of advances in the field of law of the sea treaties, I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 25.

(*Signed*) Gert **Rosenthal**
Permanent Representative